

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY****REGION 8****999 18<sup>TH</sup> STREET - SUITE 300****DENVER, CO 80202-2466****Phone 800-227-8917****<http://www.epa.gov/region08>**

December 3, 2002

Ref: 8EPR-SR

Ms. Elizabeth Bass  
Yaak School  
30117 Yaak River Road  
Troy, MT 59935

Dear Ms. Bass:

As part of our ongoing investigation and cleanup of asbestos in the Libby area, EPA conducted sampling at the Yaak School in 2001. This letter is to provide a summary of the results and briefly discuss EPA's cleanup plans for the school.

EPA conducted an inspection of the building and verified that vermiculite insulation was present in the attic. We did not analyze any samples of the insulation, but our investigation at Libby has shown that nearly all of the vermiculite insulation originating from the Libby mine contains asbestos. At this point, we assume all vermiculite insulation is potentially harmful. EPA also collected several samples of settled dust from the school's interior to determine if asbestos from the insulation or other sources had been released and was present in occupied areas. The results of the dust sampling showed no detectable "Libby" asbestos, but one sample collected from the top of the furnace did show a low level of chrysotile asbestos. Chrysotile asbestos is different from Libby asbestos and is found throughout the country. In fact, a "background" level of chrysotile is often present in urban areas. It is usually attributable to pipe insulation, ceiling tiles, break pads, or other materials manufactured with asbestos in the past. Our investigators did not note any potential sources of chrysotile asbestos during the inspection but also did not specifically look for it.

Based on these results, EPA can conclude that the vermiculite insulation is currently well-contained and presents little or no risk to users of the building. However, because of the potential for release of the insulation and other factors, EPA has made the decision to remove vermiculite insulation from all properties in the Libby and Troy areas. We have not yet decided whether we will extend this cleanup to Yaak, and will likely only do so for select buildings such as the school. So, at this time, I am unable to say for certain that we will remove insulation from the school, but I can say I think it is highly likely. Similarly, I cannot say when removal of the insulation might occur, but until it does, normal use of the building will not present any excessive risk to students or anyone else. As a precaution, we do recommend that you frequently wet-wipe surfaces where dust may accumulate, and of course, avoid disturbing or contacting the insulation.



As we move forward with our cleanup work, I will be able to provide more definitive information regarding our plans for the school.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the EPA Information Center in Libby at 293-6194, or call me directly in Denver at 1-800-227-8917, x6748. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JCE', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jim Christiansen  
Remedial Project Manager